

Goal Keeper Training Insights

Objectives

1. Getting Coaches to “Coach the Keeper”
2. Getting Players to want to play Keeper
3. Improving the skills of dedicated Keepers

With coaches “Coaching the Keeper”, more players will want to play Keeper leading to greater need to improve the skills of dedicated Keepers

Coaching the Keeper

Recruitment

Fear is the biggest reason that players do not want to play Keeper. Soccer is a team oriented sport except for the Keeper on whom all eyes turn when the shot is taken. The goal is a lot bigger than the Keeper and the odds are the Keeper will not stop a well placed shot. To induce players to take the net, the coach has to overcome the fear factor.

Suggested methods.

- Parent coaches can induce their own child with privileges to take the net. This will lessen the fear factor in the other players.
- Find the tough kids on the team. Some kids are tougher than others and you need to be tough to play Keeper.
- Ask your better players “Step up for me”. As their coach, the players respect you and want to please you. This will work with some players but not all. Don’t hold it against them if they don’t.

You have succeeded in Keeper recruitment if you get 2 players to commit to the position for each game and 1 or 2 back ups.

If you are unsuccessful, go to “Keeper by committee”. Rotate every player to take the position for a 5-10 minute shift insuring that over 2 games every player has played the position.

If you have recruited only one dedicated Keeper, play them for one half of the game only and then go to keeper by committee.

When you incorporate Keeper training (discussed below) into your practices, you will get players to step up into the position. You may be fortunate and have plenty of Keeper volunteers. Elevate the Keeper’s position by allowing only those who have had Keeper training in practice to take the net during a game.

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Training

Position. Train your Keepers that their starting position is in the center of the net about 6' in front of the goal line. Arms and legs are bent and they're leaning forward. Picture a gorilla in a fighting stance. Use the gorilla imagery to pump up your Keepers. Gorillas are tough, strong and intelligent and so are Keepers. The Keeper is the most powerful player on the team being able to do anything any other player can do and can use their hands. Foster an attitude of toughness with your Keepers. Plus it's fun to for a 7 year old to roar like a gorilla.

The Most Important Thing is to convey to your Keepers that, in almost all cases, they should stop the shot with their hands, not their feet, when they're in the penalty box. In the younger divisions, the shots are usually on the ground and novice Keepers will instinctively try to stop the shot with their feet. Constantly reinforce that they need to field the ball with their hands. An exception is when there's no other way to stop the shot except by throwing a leg at it.

Please note that if a Keeper's teammate passed to the ball to them, they cannot field the ball with their hands and must use their feet. Outside the penalty box they can only field the ball with their feet. 999 times out of 1000 the Keeper should be fielding (stopping) the ball with their hands when they are in the penalty box.

Stopping the shot. "Keep as much of the Keepers body in front of the ball as possible". On some shots this might be just the Keeper's fingernails but on all shots encourage the Keeper to get their entire body in front of the shot. If the shot is coming to the side of the Keeper he or she should move to position their body in front of the ball and not reach to the side with their hands.

Recommendations.

- Always acknowledge the Keeper with praise.
- Let the Keeper in the net at the end of the game lead the handshake line.
- Foster a "Gorilla Attitude" in your Keepers.
- Remember and reinforce **The Most Important Thing**.
- Have zero tolerance for other players who criticize the Keeper when the opposing team scores.

If a Keeper plays in the proper position, fields the ball with their feet, and gets as much their body in front of the ball as possible they will be good Keepers. Now we go on to making them better Keepers.

Game Day

The penalty box is a big area. Make sure that your Keeper knows they can use every inch of it on punts and where to place the ball on goal kicks (10' in front of the post on the side that the ball went out of bounds). Before the game, walk the outline of the

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penalty box with them so they know how far out of the net they can go. This is a good time to offer encouraging words.

The Second Most Important Thing. Warm them up. The coach does not have warm them up personally, but make sure that the keeper gets at least 25 shots rolled at them. At the U-8 and U-10 level, it's wise not to take actual shots in warm up. Roll the ball directly at them to begin with. Then roll to each side, reminding them to get their whole body in front of the ball. In the U-10 Level you can throw a basketball bounce pass at them to simulate shots in the air but that's not required with the U-8s. Remember that you are building their confidence for the game.

The Keeper is the General of the Defense. Communication between players during the course of play is more important in Soccer than any other sport. These skills start with the Keeper. When the opponents bring the ball toward the Keeper, the defenders should move to the ball. If they don't, the Keeper needs to tell them to. "Jenny, challenger her!" "Bill, move to the middle." Tell your defenders that they need to do what the Keeper tells them. All the players should know each other's names. You need to work on this in your regular practices.

OK I stopped the shot now what do I do? Good question. If the Keeper stopped the shot with their hands they can return it into the field of play any way they want. They can throw it with one hand or two hands, they can place the ball on the ground and kick it, they can drop it from their hands and punt it or they can roll it out of the penalty box. You should coach the Keeper to return the ball into the field of play dependent on the physical skills. Some 8 year olds can punt. Others can't. Encourage them to return the ball to the field of play by whatever means they feel will be most effective. (Effective being defined as, we got the ball to one of our players and they turned it up the field towards our opponent's goal). One rule on this at this age level, Never return it up the middle, always out to the side! For U-10's and U-8's taking the ball and running to either of the front corners of the penalty box and throwing it over their heads with two hands diagonally up the field is usually effective. You can coach them to do whatever works best for them but allow your Keepers to try different methods in the game. Most 8 year olds can't punt but they have a lot of fun trying. Have your Keeper talk to the strong forwards to let them know the ball will be coming their way so they can score an easy goal.

Goal Kicks. If the opponents knock the ball out of bounds across the goal line, the Keeper must bring the ball back into play via the goal kick. A goal kick is when the Keeper places the ball on the ground about 10' in front of the goal post and kicks the ball down the field. This can be difficult for many. Sharp offensive opponents will be looking to intercept the goal kick and get an easy goal. A good Keeper will make the kick before the defense is ready. Two tips to ensure successful goal kicks; first get your Keepers to make the goal kick quickly; second, opponents tend to flood the side where the ball went out of bounds so have your Keeper kick it to the opposite side. Advise your better offensive players of this tactic so there is a teammate ready to receive the kick. As noted above, always kick the ball up the side and never up the middle.

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Corner Kicks. When the Keeper's team knocks the ball out of bounds across their own goal line the opposing team gets a corner kick. An opposing team member places the ball at the corner of the field on the side where the ball went out of bounds. That player kicks the ball to offensive teammates who usually flood the area in front of the goal and in turn take a shot. The Keeper is the General of the Defense and should instruct their players to "Make the Wall". The Keeper stands with their shoulder on the post facing the player taking the corner kick. The other players make a "wall" up the line in front of the Keeper facing the player taking the corner kick. Some coaches have a "Sniper" between the wall and the kicker to intercept a pass not going towards the goal. At the U10 level, some kickers can kick the ball over "wall" into the area directly in front of the net. For that reason, some coaches take a second player out of the "wall" to cover this area.

Penalty Shots. These are rare at the U-10 and younger level but they can happen. This is one of the toughest things for a Keeper to face. Remind them that the net is a lot bigger than they are and if it's a well placed shot, there is nothing they can do to stop it and that's OK. However, you also need to tell them that most times the shooter will shoot the ball directly at the Keeper. In offensive practice sessions we work on the shooting the ball "Quick, high and where the Keeper isn't". A majority of the shots are taken directly at the Keeper. So let your Keeper know that's it not their fault if the shot is well placed and scores. But also let them know that there is a better than even chance that the shot will be made directly to them and they can and should stop it.